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SUBJECT: DARFUR: CAIRO-BASED SLM/A-UNION FRONT SPLINTERS
AFTER SIRTE

REF: CAIRO 2093

¶1. (SBU) In a December 4 meeting at his request, Youssef Hassan Youssef Abdallah of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army-Union Front (SLM/A-UF) told us that the leadership of the SLM/A-UF had divided due to the conference of Darfur rebels in Sirte, Libya, which began in late October. Mohamed Abdullah Abdul Khaleq, Coordinator of the SLM/A-UF High Command Council, and Zobeir Abdul Haqq Mohamed, SLM/A-UF Political Affairs Officer - who joined Youssef in a meeting with us in July - had decided to align with Abdullah Yehia's SLM/Unity group, said Youssef, and thus has been "expelled" from the SLM/A-UF. Ahmed Hassan Mohamed (nickname "Digdol") joined Youssef at this meeting in their place.

¶2. (SBU) According to Youssef, the Libyans "held" him in Sirte for six weeks to "encourage" him to join his former colleagues and ally with SLM/Unity. Youssef did not do so, he said, because his Fur constituency does not trust the Zaghawa who make up the base of SLM/Unity's support. He added that Yehia and SLM/Unity had previously proven untrustworthy by breaking away from Minni Minawi's SLM and adherence to the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). Youssef charged that Yehia is merely a figurehead on top of Osman Al Bushra, the "real power" of SLM/Unity and a "Libyan stooge." Youssef claimed that the SLM/A-UF supports rebel unity in general but wants to ensure that the Fur are represented in proportion to their percentage of the population in Darfur, charging that the Zaghawa is over-represented by rebel commanders.

¶3. (SBU) Youssef was planning to travel to the U.S. at the invitation of the SLM/A-UF Denver, Colorado office - headed by Faisal Adam Daoud, possibly an American citizen - and potentially in coordination with Save Darfur, and also planned to travel to Asmara. He was also expecting an invitation from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to a potential second round of the ongoing rebel unification talks in Juba, though such an invitation had not yet come.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: Although Youssef presents his group as an important faction in Darfur, this split seems to have further marginalized a group that was already of secondary importance. We can only assume that Youssef no longer commands the loyalty of all of the 1500 to 2000 "fighters" that he previously claimed (reftel). End comment.

¶5. (SBU) Bio note: Youssef was noticeably twitching during the meeting while listening to our comments and questions, behavior that he did not exhibit during the July meeting. End bio note.

RICCIARDONE